



## News From Congresswoman Hilda L. Solis 32<sup>nd</sup> Congressional District of California

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### **Solis: CAFTA will hurt Workers and Businesses**

**WASHINGTON, D.C.-***Today, Congresswoman Hilda L. Solis (CA-32) issued the following statement regarding the Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA):*

“I am strongly opposed to the Dominican Republic-Central American Free Trade Agreement (DR-CAFTA).

“DR-CAFTA is largely based on the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). By signing DR-CAFTA, the Bush Administration has ignored the mistakes of NAFTA. Ten years ago, NAFTA proponents promised increased wages and economic development in the United States, Mexico, and Canada and decreased migration. The agreement has failed on all accounts.

“As in Mexico with NAFTA, DR-CAFTA would cause the loss of family farms and lure more workers, most of them women. DR-CAFTA may create jobs of women, but the working conditions are unimaginable to the American public. The bulk of these jobs are in the Export-Processing Zones, also known as *maquiladoras*.

“I have visited Mexico and seen firsthand the devastating consequences of NAFTA. In the *maquiladora* zone in Ciudad Juarez and other border cities, wages are low, union organizing is suppressed, and industrial pollution jeopardizes the health of workers and residents.

“Women that work in the *maquiladoras* have reported forced pregnancy testing, sexual harassment, and physical abuse. DR-CAFTA does not require compliance with international labor rights and does not protect women from discrimination. Inadequate free trade agreements, such as NAFTA, not only hurt our women workers, but also hurt American workers.

“Over 750,000 jobs in the United States have been lost due to NAFTA and immigration to the United States has only increased. DR-CAFTA will mean more job loss and wage decline for American workers. U.S. Latino workers have been disproportionately hurt by NAFTA because they tend to be concentrated in industries such as textiles and other manufacturing sectors.

“While Latinos represent 12.6% of the total U.S. workforce, they account for 26% of textile and apparel industry workers. In California, Latinos make up an estimated 80% of the California garment industry. In fact, currently 51% of American voters oppose NAFTA and claim it has hurt workers, wages and has cost us jobs.

“Americans believe that we should NOT pursue future free trade agreements similar to NAFTA. In fact, the League of United Latin American Citizens, LULAC, the oldest and largest Latino organization in the U.S. publicly opposes DR- CAFTA. LULAC claims that DR-CAFTA “falls short of being acceptable” and fear that CAFTA will unleash enormous loses for all workers, in the U.S. and Central America.

“As the only Member of Congress of Central American descent, I understand the importance of supporting efforts to promote sustainable development and preservation of the agricultural sector in that region. However, U.S. policy towards Latin America should go beyond free trade policies that do little to raise wages and working conditions for the poor.

“Those who oppose DR-CAFTA do so because of the irreparable harm it will have to the economy and workers of Central America and the United States. We can not allow the failures of NAFTA be reproduced through DR-CAFTA.”

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